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THE MILLENNIUM DECLARATION: THE CHALLENGES FOR EUROPE

Note by the Executive Secretary

Summary

General Assembly Resolution 55/162 on the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit invites all specialized agencies and related organizations of the United Nations system to strengthen and adjust their activities, programmes and medium-term strategies, as appropriate, taking into account the objectives of the Summit. It also invites the regional commissions, in cooperation with regional intergovernmental organizations and regional development banks, to review progress made towards implementing the Millennium Declaration.

In response to this mandate, the present note proposes a process, which will place the ECE activities in the framework of the key policy concerns of the Millennium Declaration relevant to the region. The ECE is already active in a number of these areas, such as environment, forestry, sustainable energy, gender equality and private-public partnership. There is, however, a need to better highlight the existing links between ECE activities and the Millennium Declaration objectives and to intensify and further develop activities in other relevant areas of concern, in particular those related to poverty and development.

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The mechanisms proposed to monitor the implementation of the commitments of the Millennium Declaration are based on the existing networks and channels of communication and cooperation, established at the ECE, and include: (i) periodical review of progress made in selected areas of concern during the Annual Session of the Commission and meetings of its Principal Subsidiary Bodies; (ii) dialogue with relevant stakeholders, i.e. business community, non-governmental organizations, representatives of academia; (iii) promotion of coordinated initiatives for the joint follow-up to the Millennium Declaration through inter-agency cooperation at the regional level; (iv) comparing national experiences and disseminating best practices in monitoring the implementation of the Millennium Declaration commitments; and (v) information sharing and better communication on the policies undertaken at the national and regional levels.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE MILLENNIUM SUMMIT AND THE FOLLOW-UP TO ITS OUTCOME

1. In September 2000, the Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the United Nations gathered in New York "to reaffirm their faith in the Organization and its Charter as indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world". At the end of the Summit they issued a Millennium Declaration, in which they reaffirmed the basic values and principles to which they are committed, and identified key objectives, which they would pursue in order to translate these shared values into actions. Finally, Member States resolved to undertake all efforts to reach a certain number of goals and targets, some of which were defined in quantitative terms and given a precise deadline.

2. General Assembly Resolution A/55/162 on the "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit" stressed the need to translate the commitments of the Summit into action and:

- underlined that the approach to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration should be "integrated, coordinated, comprehensive and balanced ... at the national, regional and international levels";

- decided "to use existing structures and mechanisms and upcoming events – special sessions of the General Assembly, conferences and other events – to the maximum extent possible in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration";

- invited "specialized agencies and related organizations of the UN system to strengthen and adjust their activities, programmes and medium term strategies, as appropriate, to take into account the follow-up of the Summit;

- invited "the regional commissions, in cooperation with regional intergovernmental organizations and regional development banks, to review progress made towards implementing the Millennium Declaration";

- requested the Secretary-General "urgently to prepare a long-term road-map towards the implementation of the Millennium Declaration within the United Nations system" and put in place a "reporting system", whose main attributes should be those of "coherence" and "integration".

II. KEY TRENDS AND POLICY CONCERNS IN THE ECE REGION

3. This section presents key trends and policy concerns relevant to the ECE region, as presented in the framework of the Millennium Declaration. They relate to the following six objectives of the Declaration: peace, security and disarmament; development and poverty eradication; human rights, democracy and good governance; protecting the vulnerable; protecting our common environment; and strengthening the United Nations. These trends indicate that despite progress made in many areas, for others the opposite is true. These concerns will be addressed by the Member States with the support, as relevant, of the ECE, other UN agencies and international organizations active in the region.

1. Peace, Security and Disarmament

4. The end of the Cold War, and the political overhaul accompanying it, have created opportunities for peace and security in Europe, but have also given rise to political instability.

5. Since 1989, ethnic clashes and conflicts, as well as abuse of human rights, proliferation of discriminatory practices, terrorism and mass displacement of population, have accompanied the birth of some new States. Internal conflicts have resulted in civilian casualties, many of them women and children. Having only 7% of the world's population, the ECE region, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, now hosts an estimated 15% of the world's refugees and internally displaced people. In absolute terms, the total number of refugees and internally displaced has reached 7,285,800.

6. Conflicts have had a devastating effect especially on economies and living conditions in countries directly affected by them. They suffer from significant human losses, disintegration of civil society's fundamental structures, physical damage to roads and other infrastructure, broken trade links, and resulting low FDI inflows. In particular in South-eastern Europe, some economies have been strained to the verge of collapse.

7. According to SIPRI, trends in disarmament in the ECE region have been mixed. While significant progress was made in the first half of the last decade in reducing military expenditure and production, there seems to be a reversal of this trend in some countries. It is noteworthy that this reversal is not limited to those countries that have an on-going internal conflict in place, or countries with such conflicts at their borders. In relative terms, many countries have sustained military expenditures despite economic difficulties and growing demand for social protection. Under such circumstances, military expenditure represents a burden, draining resources away from financing productive activities and public services. In some other cases, the need to secure export markets or maintain traditional political relationships has created obstacles to disarmament.

8. The present situation in the region is rather precarious and is characterized by the lack of economic resources and development gaps in many countries. It would therefore be overly optimistic to suggest that the threat of conflicts in the ECE region no longer exists. Some conflicts have been contained, but the roots have not been removed. Many of these conflicts have multiple causes, among which the economic dimension is of particular relevance. Negative economic trends, rising poverty and inequalities, discrimination based on ethnicity, culture or religion, and proliferation of organized crime have further aggravated tense relationships between ethnic groups. There are also serious problems of post-conflict recovery in some sub-regions, which include finding a long-term solution to the problem of refugees and internally displaced people.

9. In view of the above, a major concern is to address the economic and social roots of conflict and insecurity in Europe. This implies the need to:

- deepen the understanding of the relationship between economic, social, environmental and institutional factors, on the one hand, and societal tension and conflict, on the other;

- develop a monitoring framework and mechanism, pooling the capacities and capabilities available in the national and specialized regional organizations.

2. Development and Poverty Eradication

10. The rise of poverty is one of the most serious concerns in the ECE region. It should be seen in the context of growing economic disparities among countries as a result of divergent development paths, especially among the ECE member countries with economies in transition. While some of them have embarked on a path of sustained recovery, others have been less successful and are still struggling with a deep recession and limited capacities to address the negative effects of opening up to the global economy. Structural reforms have created conditions for greater competitiveness and growth. They have also engendered a growing polarization of development opportunities among and within countries, de-industrialization, regressive adjustment of human and social capital, financial instability, and growing inequalities in income and in access to basic public services.

11. During the 1990s only a small group of central European transition countries displayed a tendency to converge, on the per capita income level, with the market economies of Western Europe. Others have been falling behind in the catching up process and have not yet reached the pre-transition level of GDP. In 1999, in the Commonwealth of Independent States, the level of GDP was on average only 55% of the pre-transition level, and in such countries as the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Tajikistan, only about one-third. Although in 2000 all transition countries enjoyed a positive economic growth, further recovery remains fragile in many countries. In some countries, the recovery perspective has also been complicated by a large external debt and uncertainty of external financing. Others suffer from the threat of energy shortage due to supply constraints.

12. Development prospects in the ECE transition countries are also seriously undermined by an upsurge of poverty. The dramatic increase of poverty is widespread, and the majority of the poor are working people with children. Moreover, according to World Bank estimates, between 1988 and 1998 the average absolute poverty rate (below US$ 2 per day) in the ECE countries in

transition increased from 2 to 21% of the population. Levels of income poverty are highest in Central Asia and the South Caucasus. Poverty has also acquired an ethnic and regional dimension in many countries. The incidence of poverty is higher among people living in rural areas, small towns, especially one-company towns, and economically declining regions.

13. The increase of poverty is accompanied by a sharp increase in inequalities. They relate not only to income, but also to opportunities, which have been affected by the increasingly uneven access to health and education. Inequalities have increased across all social groups, between men and women, the urban and rural population, and between ethnic groups. In some transition countries, income inequalities are now comparable to those of countries of Latin America, which have the highest income inequalities in the world.

14. The decline of life expectancy is another worrisome trend. Between 1989 and the mid 1990s, male life expectancy fell on average by four to five years in the most affected countries. There is also a resurgence of the diseases which were thought to be long under control, such as tuberculosis, and a rapid spread of HIV/AIDS.

15. Transition hardship has been unevenly distributed among men and women. Although the full extent of female poverty is difficult to evaluate due to the lack of data, deep cuts in women's employment, lower wages, shrinking family allowances and increasing family responsibilities suggest that poverty among women is widespread. Women have been affected by large job cuts in the feminized public sector services, transport and communication, but also by discrimination in the labour market and, in some countries, also by discrimination in the course of land privatization. This has not been balanced by an adequate increase in women's employment in expanding market-related services, such as banking, insurance and business services. Women have been forced to take over a large share of caring functions, often at the expense of their employment, due to adverse changes in social protection, especially the dismantling of public child care systems.

16. It should be noted that poverty was viewed, especially at the early stages of transition, as a temporary phenomenon. It was expected that growth revival, stimulated by market forces, would lift many people out of poverty, as their incomes were often only slightly below the poverty line ("shallow poverty"). Consequently, social policies put in place were more focused on offsetting the price liberalization shocks, rather than preventing poverty from deepening. The persistence of poverty in the region, even in the most successful transition countries, shows however the need for more effective poverty eradication programmes, which would address its various dimensions.

17. In the light of the above the major concern is poverty and other negative social trends, characterized by:

- the growing economic disparities between and within the ECE member States;
- rising absolute poverty especially among children and youth;
- persistent and deepening poverty and the emergence of an underclass;
- rising social inequalities;

- insufficient attention to poverty eradication and other social concerns in the design and implementation of economic policies.

3. Protecting our Common Environment

18. Air, water and soil pollution have been a legacy of increasing industrialization, energy use and the burning of fossil fuels. Since 1989 there has been some improvement in air quality as better technology and increased efficiency have led to decreased emissions. In addition, decline in industrial output and economic restructuring in some regions have resulted in less atmospheric pollution. The Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution through its protocols and reporting procedures has encouraged these improvements by setting targets for emission ceilings and requiring Parties to report their emissions on an annual basis. Early emphasis on decreasing sulphur emissions has resulted in major reductions in emissions of this pollutant throughout the ECE region. Success with other atmospheric pollutants has been more mixed. Efforts to abate nitrogen oxides have been offset by the increase in the number of motor vehicles, while control of ammonia emissions from agricultural practices has been problematic.

19. Improvements to water and soils are less readily identified. Soils suffering from acidification, excess nitrogen, and elevated heavy metal and organic compound concentrations may take many years to revert to a pristine, or acceptable, state. Pollutant concentrations accumulated over many years in soils will not decrease overnight. Water quality is affected by the slow release of pollutants from soils but also by direct inputs of pollutants from urban discharges and industrial wastes. While there have been marked improvements to water quality in some parts of the ECE region, in others, such as Central and Eastern Europe, water quality is often poor. The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes has done much to introduce agreements and monitoring of shared water resources but much remains to be done in Central and Eastern Europe. Industrial development and over-exploitation of water resources for agricultural irrigation still pose major threats to water quality.

20. Overall there is still much scope for improving the current situation both through effective implementation of existing international instruments and also through the development of more stringent policies and agreements on pollution control. Current projections indicate that energy use up to 2010 will continue to increase, particularly in the Commonwealth of Independent States. However, there are good opportunities for energy saving in these areas as past improvements have resulted simply from economic decline and restructuring. The international Conventions provide a useful mechanism for setting environmental targets for the future and promoting the means for meeting these goals.

21. In view of the above, there is a need to:

- fully implement the agreed international Conventions and other instruments in order to ensure rehabilitation and protection of the environment;

- develop more rigorous policies and agreements on pollution control;

- promote a comprehensive approach to sustainable development.

4. Human Rights, Democracy and Good Governance

22. Systemic changes in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union have greatly improved access to basic economic freedoms and to civil and political rights in this part of the ECE region. The progress has resulted in free elections, democratization of institutions and respect for individual rights. These changes thus set a framework for good governance. However, progress towards democracy and good governance have also been accompanied by cases of open violation of human rights, the return to kinship and clan relationships, as well as by proliferation of organized crime and corruption.

23. Clearly the process of institution building has proved to be a much bigger challenge than was anticipated at the beginning of the transition process. The extent of the task is enormous, as countries have had to establish a whole range of new institutions, ranging from property rights, commercial and investment laws, to a social safety net suitable to market conditions. Furthermore, the establishing of formal institutions was only the first step towards a sound framework for good governance. As the experience of the last ten years indicates, such a framework also requires a clear division of responsibilities between the State, private sector and civil society. It also requires effective law enforcement and changes in value system, norms and behaviours.

24. In view of the above, a major concern is the weakness of institutions and governance system in a number of countries with economies in transition. This implies the need to:

- strengthen governance and institutional capacity in the pursuit of a more effective democracy and protection of human rights;

- fight organized crime, corruption and other illicit activities.

5. Protecting the vulnerable

25. Political, economic and social changes in transition countries left large segments of society very vulnerable. People lost guaranteed employment, the security of old age pensions and free access to basic social services. Massive unemployment, underemployment, non-payment of salaries, loss of savings due to hyperinflation and fast rising costs of health and other services made them very susceptible to various risks. They suffered from the loss of self-respect, when their skills and knowledge were no longer in demand. Many people became marginalized, as they lost access to information and formal support networks, and responded to the stress by self-destructive behaviour, such as alcohol abuse, depression and even suicide. This "transition stress" is now considered a major factor explaining the decline in life expectancy in these countries.

26. The increased demand for protection was accompanied by a shrinking welfare services provision. In the 1990s, countries abandoned major components of the welfare system of the past, while a new system was not yet set up. At the same time, public services, including health and education, social transfers and employment-related benefits have deteriorated and their value has substantially eroded.

27. In most transition countries, children and youth are among the most affected by the erosion of the provision of welfare services. Trends are especially alarming in Russia, the South Caucasus, Central Asia, as well as in many countries of South-eastern Europe, where an increasing number of children do not have access to basic education and health care. Primary school enrolment fell by ten or more percentage points in the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. Conflicts in South-eastern Europe have disrupted the education of thousands of children. Access to education has greatly diversified based on income. Public schools have cut their programmes to the minimum and curtailed their social function. The appearance of "street children" is an extreme manifestation of the family in crisis.

28. Among youth, there is increased risk-taking behaviour related to smoking, alcohol consumption and intravenous drug use. The latter is a major factor behind the staggering pace of HIV/ AIDS infection. According to UNAIDS, the number of cases recorded in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union has jumped from 30,000 infected persons in 1994 to about 270,000 in 1998. Ukraine is currently the country most affected, with a total number of cases soaring from 1,500 to 110,000 in the same period. Since most drug users are in the 15-24 age group, adolescents and young adults are clearly the most affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. People infected with HIV/AIDS are often discriminated against and suffer social exclusion.

29. Refugees and internally displaced people constitute another highly vulnerable group within the region. Conflicts in South-eastern Europe, in the South Caucasus, Russia, and Tajikistan, according to the UNHCR, have displaced almost 4.5 million people (including 1,270,000 refugees and 3,130,000 internally displaced persons). At the same time, the new refugee-receiving countries in central Europe and the Baltics have inadequate financial capacity, reception facilities and weak institutions to deal effectively with asylum-seekers, integration of recognized refugees and the return of illegal migrants to their countries of origin. Internally displaced people are in a particularly difficult situation as, according to the law, they fall under the domestic jurisdiction of their respective States and do not therefore benefit from the protection stemming from the legal regime created to protect refugees. As a result, many of these people are left without effective protection and assistance.

30. The above demonstrates that children, youth, ethnic minorities and internally displaced persons are at risk. There is a need to address:

- the erosion of basic public services in health and education in a number of countries;
- the lack of employment opportunities, and proliferation of high-risk behaviour among youth;
- the increased vulnerability of ethnic minorities and internally displaced persons.

6. Strengthening the United Nations

31. In the Millennium Declaration, Member States committed themselves to "make the United Nations a more effective instrument for pursuing the priorities described therein. To this end, Member countries resolved *inter alia* to ensure that the Organization is provided on a timely and predictable basis with the resources it needs to carry out its mandates". They also resolved

"to ensure greater policy coherence and better cooperation between the UN, its agencies, the Bretton Woods Institutions and the WTO, as well as other multilateral bodies with a view to achieving a fully coordinated approach to the problems of peace and development". They also committed themselves "to give greater opportunities to the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society in general to contribute to the realization of the Organization's goals and programmes".

32. These commitments are in line with those emphasized in the ECE reform and the Plan of Action. In view of the above, and in order to make the ECE a more effective instrument for pursuing the regional priorities of the Millennium Declaration, it would be necessary to pay more attention to:

- problems of the most disadvantaged countries of the ECE region;
- the linkages between the economic and social aspects of development and the transition process;
- regional policy dialogue on poverty;
- promoting more effective cooperation at the sub-regional level;
- opportunities and challenges of EU enlargement in the context of pan-European integration.

33. The process described in Section IV below aims to address these concerns.

III. TAKING STOCK OF THE ECE CONTRIBUTION TO ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM SUMMIT OBJECTIVES

34. The Millennium Declaration framework is a suitable tool for reviewing ECE work in a comprehensive and coherent context. It is also a powerful instrument for looking ahead in a credible and focused manner. This section puts ECE activities in the context of the Millennium Declaration framework.

35. ECE activities have significant implications for peace and security, development, poverty, good governance and the environment. The range and scope of these activities demonstrate the potential for the ECE contribution to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration commitments. This contribution does not necessarily imply additional activities, but rather the mainstreaming of the Millennium Declaration perspective into the on-going ECE programme of work. Moreover, placing these activities in such a framework stimulates a broader and more integrated policy approach, which demonstrates the importance of mutually reinforcing linkages between different United Nations activities and improves their consistency at the national, regional and global levels.

1. Peace, Security and Disarmament

36. The Millennium Declaration attaches great importance to conflict prevention. ECE, through its cooperation with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, has demonstrated that economic and structural factors are central to the building of a secure and peaceful world, while poverty and inequality can contribute to triggering or exacerbating conflict. Sustainable economic development is a strong stimulus for rebuilding civil society, once conflicts have ended. The ECE, both through its core and operational activities, contributes to developing a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to conflict prevention. In particular, ECE's sub-regional approach can be instrumental in reinstating the dialogue between countries and, thereby, contribute to peace-building.

37. To this end, the ECE has undertaken pioneer work such as that in support of the South-east European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) and the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), where emphasis has been given to developing integrated regional programmes that involve countries in common projects. The same approach was adopted in preparing a programme of support for the South Caucasus. The ECE cooperation programme with the Central European Initiative (CEI) includes specific projects and activities aimed at the recovery of the economy, the development of an entrepreneurial environment and new financial schemes for micro-enterprise creation in the countries affected by crisis and wars. The ECE is also engaged in the support of other sub-regional organizations, such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC).

38. Monitoring social and economic trends can offer precious information for the prevention of conflict. Often signs of discrimination or social unrest can precede the outbreak of violence, as was the case for the increasing discrimination against ethnic groups in the labour market in south-eastern Europe. In 2000, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the ECE started a project on social monitoring, as a follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and Beyond.

2. Development and Poverty Eradication

39. ECE activities have a significant impact on development. They may also have considerable social implications, including an impact on poverty. They do so by contributing to a better understanding of development problems, including the need for gender-mainstreaming. They also contribute to institution-building, infrastructure development, promotion of entrepreneurship, and facilitation of trade and investment flows.

40. The ECE contributes to the development of policies through its analytical activities and monitoring of social, economic and demographic trends, emphasizing the institutional and structural aspects, particularly, of the transition process, and drawing attention to the growing gaps in income and wealth in the region.

41. Norms, standards and regulations, designed and promoted by the ECE in such important economic sectors as transportation, energy, trade and enterprise development, environment and human settlements, have an impact on relative prices and behaviour patterns of economic agents and, thus, on the development process as a whole. They also have an impact on the social welfare of population through improving transportation safety, energy efficiency, environment,

housing, and affecting the costs of living. The latter, if not properly addressed, may benefit only few social groups, while hurting others whose capacity to meet the new costs is low.

42. ECE technical assistance, especially to countries in transition, helps to build up necessary capacities and capabilities to monitor and assess development changes, to promote progressive methods of production, waste management, pollution control, development of small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as to reduce administrative and other non-technical barriers to border-crossing. Activities in the area of entrepreneurship are among those most directly linked to the Millennium Declaration goal of poverty eradication, as they could be a powerful instrument in improving income opportunities for the poor and disadvantaged groups.

3. Protecting our Common Environment

43. ECE has an important role in reducing the pollution load and improving the environment and protecting human health through binding international legislation. Governments in the region have adopted and are implementing Conventions on transboundary air pollution; the protection and use of transboundary watercourses and international lakes; environmental impact assessment in a transboundary context; the transboundary impact of industrial accidents; and environmental information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. These legal instruments, if broadly implemented by Governments, provide powerful tools for achieving the goals set in the Millennium Declaration.

44. The programme of environmental performance reviews provides in-depth assessments of the environmental performance of countries in transition and recommendations for improving that performance. The implementation of the recommendations and emerging environmental priorities in countries are assessed in the follow-up work. The "Environment for Europe" Ministerial process constitutes a high-level political forum for setting political targets for the environmental work in the region. ECE is servicing the process as a coordinating secretariat. In addition to governments, the key intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations also participate, which gives the process a crucial role in strengthening environmental policies and improving the effectiveness of national responses.

45. ECE, together with the UNEP regional office, is responsible for the regional preparation of the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. A regional assessment of achievements and problems in implementation of Agenda 21 is being carried out. In September 2001, a Special Session of the Commission, acting as a regional and intergovernmental preparatory meeting, will adopt a declaration on future regional priorities in implementing policies for sustainable development.

4. Human Rights, Democracy and Good Governance

46. The ECE has become increasingly active in the area of good governance. The ECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters is the first international legally binding instrument to ensure transparency and public participation in environmental matters. The series of meetings organized by the Advisory Group on Intellectual Property represents another initiative taken in this area.

47. The ECE also contributes to the international effort to combat crime and corruption. Within the framework of SECI, the ECE has undertaken the project *Combating cross-border crime and corruption*, under which the Regional Centre for Combating Trans-border Crime was established in Bucharest. The ECE has sponsored a series of seminars on this topic in cooperation with the Crans Montana Forum and has also contributed to numerous OSCE events, which addressed problems of governance, crime and corruption.

5. Protecting the vulnerable

48. The ECE has contributed to formulating policies to improve the conditions of certain disadvantaged groups. One example is a project on "Micro-financing and advisory services for rural areas in Albania", implemented in cooperation with CEI and the recipient country. The project was designed to provide micro-loans to small local entrepreneurs and family businesses in Albanian villages, with particular attention to refugee hosting areas. ECE activities in protecting the vulnerable have however been limited.

IV. ECE: THE WAY AHEAD IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MILLENNIUM DECLARATION

49. The ECE can be used by its member States in their efforts to implement the Millennium Declaration commitments. It provides an intergovernmental framework for sharing information and expertise, for comparing experiences and disseminating best practices, and for promoting policy dialogue.

50. This role is rooted in the experience and expertise accumulated by the ECE in many fields identified by the Millennium Declaration, and described in Part III above. In some areas, the ECE should "strengthen and adjust its activities, programmes and medium-term strategies", as requested by General Assembly resolution 55/162. More work is needed to analyse the linkages between economic and environmental factors underlying peace, security and poverty. Analytical inputs are also required to highlight the sustainability aspect of activities in transport and energy and their distributional impact.

51. These proposed adjustments should not in principle lead to a major refocusing, considering the wide and solid tradition of structural and institutional economic analysis at the ECE, and the good experience gained through intersectoral projects.

52. It is proposed that six main mechanisms be used to assist member countries in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration objectives and in monitoring progress made:

(i) The Commission, particularly at its annual meetings and Seminars, or through ad hoc initiatives, will periodically review progress made towards implementing the Millennium Declaration, as it is invited to do so by the General Assembly resolution.

(ii) The ECE Principal Subsidiary Bodies will be invited to consider what contribution they can make to the implementation process, and how to integrate the Millennium Declaration concerns and objectives into their programmes of work.

(iii) A dialogue with the relevant stakeholders, i.e. business community, non-governmental organizations, representatives of academia, will be held to raise awareness and promote public-private partnership in support for the follow-up to the Millennium Declaration.

(iv) Through inter-agency cooperation at the regional level the ECE will promote coordinated initiatives for the joint follow-up to the Millennium Declaration.

(v) Comparing national experiences and disseminating best practices in monitoring of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration commitments.

(vi) Information sharing and better communication on the policies undertaken at the national and regional levels for implementing the Millennium Declaration will be promoted, using available tools and technologies with view to stimulating peer dialogue and public awareness.

Conclusion

53. The Millennium Declaration is considered to be one of the most important documents adopted by the collective membership of the United Nations. It has the potential to become a powerful instrument of change, having an enormous impact globally. However, unless the commitments contained therein are realized, its significance will be lost.

54. It is for this reason that this note has highlighted the existing links between ECE activities and the objectives of the Millennium Declaration, and has flagged how adjustments in ECE's programme of work could contribute to assisting the efforts of Member States to making those objectives a reality.